ILLINOIS LOCAL WORKFORCE AREA 10 – WILL COUNTY

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

Local Plan 4-Year Plan

2024-2028

Revised 2026

CHAPTER 4: OPERATING SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

This chapter provides an overview of all the operating systems and policies within the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs). LWIAs must incorporate key documents into the plan that describe the one-stop delivery system and the services that are provided by the workforce partners. LWIAs are required to provide updated information and analysis noting any significant impacts of the COVID-19 National Health Emergency and what steps will be taken to address the challenges and opportunities that are associated with the local operating system and policies.

A. *Coordination of Planning Requirements: The plan will incorporate the Memorandum of Understanding and Service Integration Action Plan and include the following statements in this chapter:*
   1. *The Local Workforce Innovation Area (10) Memorandum of Understanding provides a description of the one-stop delivery system, and other information that is essential to the establishment and operation of effective local workforce development systems as required by the WIOA Rule (20 CFR Part 678.705). The Memorandum of Understanding and any subsequent modifications is incorporated by reference into this plan.*
   2. *The Local Workforce Innovation Area (10) Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool provides a description of how local workforce partners will align and coordinate services as required by the State of Illinois Service Integration Policy (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 13). The Service Integration Self-Assessment Tool, and any subsequent modifications, are incorporated by reference into this plan.*

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County (WIB) works to ensure that all planning documents required are completed with all partners involved to be as comprehensive as possible. These documents, including the Memorandum of Understanding and Service Integration Plan, are incorporated by reference into Will County's WIOA Four-Year Plan so that the planning requirements of each is coordinated.

The WIB also participates in other planning projects including the Will County Center for Economic Development's (CED) Shaping the Economy strategic plan as well as the regional strategic planning which encompasses the 10-county Northeast Economic Development Region (NEEDR). This region covers seven local workforce areas and is an ongoing process with priorities updated annually.

B. *Provide a copy of the following local policies and agreements:*

1. *Chief Elected Official (CEO) Functions and Agreement Between Multiple Chief Elected Officials (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 2)* **Single County – Not Applicable**
2. *Chief Elected Official Delegation of Authority and Acknowledgment of Financial Liability (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 3)* **Attached**
3. *Local Workforce Innovation Board (LWIB) Certification and Recertification Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 5)* **LWIA 10 follows the requirements as outlined in the WIOA policy.**
4. *One-Stop Operator Procurement (WIOA Policy Chapter 1, Section 7)* **LWIA 10 follows the requirements as outlined in the WIOA policy. Attached is the OSO Procurement Attestation.**
5. *Career Planning (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 2)* **LWIA 10 does not have a Career Planning Policy to date. LWIA 10 does not have a local policy.**
6. *General Follow-Up Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 4, Section 3)* **Attached**
7. *Selective Service Registration Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 1.1)* **Attached**
8. *Youth Eligibility (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 4)* **Attached**
9. *Service Priorities (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 6)* **Attached**

10. *Veterans' Priority of Service Requirements (WIOA Policy Chapter 5, Section 7)* **Attached**
11. *Individual Training Accounts (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.1)* **Attached**
12. *On-the-Job Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.1)* **Attached**
13. *Incumbent Worker Training (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.2.3)* **Attached**
14. Work Experience (WEX) and Transitional Jobs (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 2.5)
15. *Training Provider and Training Program Eligibility – Eligible Training Provider List (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 3)* **Attached**
16. *Supportive Services (WIOA Policy Chapter 7, Section 4)* **Attached**
17. *Privacy and Security (Personally Identifiable Information) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 2.2)* **Attached**
18. *Property Control for Property Purchased with WIOA Funds (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 3.6)* **Attached**
19. *Compliant and Grievance Procedures (Nondiscrimination) (WIOA Policy Chapter 8, Section 5)* **Attached**

C. *Describe how the use of technology and other alternative means of service delivery in the one-stop delivery system, including a description of:*

1. *How the workforce centers are implementing and transitioning to an integrated, technology-enabled intake and case management information system for programs carried out under WIOA (§ 679.560(b)(20)).*

Though each partner uses their own system(s) for their service delivery and tracking, the Workforce Investment Board uses AGS Prime to manage, develop, and improve programs and services offered to customers of the One Stop system. Enhancements to the AGS Prime system now allows partner specific data analysis as well as utilizing the system as a customer management system (CMS) with business customers.

All required career services are available in the Workforce Center of Will County, either in person by staff who are housed at the Center, or via direct linkage technology. Adults, dislocated workers, youth, and employers will be provided with services by the Workforce Services Division of Will County, Illinois Department of Employment Security, Illinois Department of Human Services – Division of Rehabilitation Services and Joliet Junior College onsite.

All partners who do not have staff working in the Center will provide their required career services via direct linkage technology. Center customers who desire career services from an off-site partner will be assisted by Resource Room staff to connect with that partner via direct linkage in order to connect in real time to partner staff who can assist them.

Currently, direct linkage connections are available for Joliet Junior College's Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Division of Rehabilitation Services, ILDHS TANF, Joliet Junior College's Career and Technical Education Department, Will County Center for Community Concerns, Kankakee County Community Services, Inc., National Able, and Joliet Job Corp.

We have shared data agreements with state agency partners to provide information to case managers

and career planners. However, given the diversity of data systems between partners in the system, it will be necessary to have leadership from the state to allow for comprehensive integration.

2. *How the local area is using multiple methods to provide orientations for customers, including but not limited to, virtual and asynchronous orientations.*

General program information is available on the Workforce Center's website (will.works) with links to said information and partner agencies. Information is also available on social media platforms including Facebook, LinkedIn, X, and Instagram.

Customer orientation information is available to view on the Title 1 website (jobs4people.org) and linked to the Center's website.

Those visiting the Workforce Center facility, are able to view the orientation in the resource room. The addition of Outreach kiosks further enhance our ability to provide general information and customer orientation sessions throughout the county.

Through meetings, partners are continuously cross trained on programs to ensure customers are information of all services available to them. The addition of information in the Center partners' newsletter will further increase each agency's knowledge of services available to customers.

3. *How the Local Board will facilitate access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system, through the use of technology and other mean, such as online meeting software and mobile workforce centers. (§ 679.560(b)(5)(ii)).*

Will County provides access to services provided through the one-stop delivery system in the following ways:

- Various workshops held throughout the month are livestreamed on social media and archived for a user to view at their convenience.
- The Workforce Services Division of Will County maintains an electronic Job Board which is linked to their website and the Center's website.
- Our Business Services Team, which includes our partner agencies, makes presentations to various business-led organizations, sends a quarterly newsletter to stakeholders to increase awareness of services, and hosts webinars describing the services available and answering questions from participating businesses.
- Through a supplemental grant, outreach kiosks were placed throughout the County. Each kiosk will provide direct access to the Workforce Center's services.
- In addition, many workforce services are available online through Illinois WorkNet, and Illinois JobLink.
- Center staff participate in a variety of community events throughout the year, including: festivals, fairs, hiring and resource events to increase awareness of programs and services available.
- A monthly newsletter is sent electronically highlighting services, trends, and opportunities.

D. Describe how the Local Board will support the strategies identified in the WIOA State Plan and work with entities carrying out core programs, including a description of the following (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)):

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County leads a system that promotes business driven talent solutions that integrate education, workforce, and economic development resources across systems to provide businesses, individuals, and communities with the opportunity to prosper and contribute to growing the economy of Will County.

The WIB and our One-Stop Operator (Workforce Services Division of Will County) are involved in:

- Demand-driven strategic planning at the regional level for many years with the six other LWAs in the Northeast Economic Development Region (Region 4);
- Supporting employer-driven local and regional sector initiatives such as apprenticeships, incumbent worker trainings and specific regional initiatives around manufacturing; healthcare; and transportation, distribution and logistics (TDL);
- Educating all clients on career pathways and the steps needed to advance within a given occupation or industry sector;
- Expanding service integration even further as a result of the One-Stop self-assessment and improvement planning across the One-Stop partner agencies;
- Utilizing multiple sources of data for the purpose of data-driven decision-making. These sources include Lightcast, IDES, and Illinois workNet; and
- Frequently exploring the options available for utilizing as much data as possible and appropriate to understanding what is happening, changing and trending in the local economy. WIB shares information and data with the local economic development agencies and municipal departments to support attraction and retention efforts throughout the County.

The Board has charged the One-Stop Operator with continuing to review and coordinate programming in the Center. Partners have cataloged all services, workshops, and programs provided both in the One-Stop Center and at other locations. Through this process, the partners have identified services that are similar and have begun to provide those services in a joint fashion. An example of this is the job fairs that were previously hosted for individual employers by both IDES and WSD. Currently, these partners host joint events that include multiple employers in order to recruit for employees. In addition, partners continue to identify gaps in services at the Center and will initiate plans to eliminate those gaps.

1. *Expanding access to employment, training, education and supportive services for eligible individuals, particularly eligible individuals with barriers to employment (§ 679.560(b)(2)(i));*

Our Workforce Center of Will County has a website (will.works) which outlines programs and services available both at the Workforce Center and offsite. Additionally, the referral system among partner agencies ensures that applicants are directed to supportive service programs and are made aware of employment, training, and education offerings.

At the core of all Board programs is the identification and focus on the four key industry sectors: Healthcare, Manufacturing, Professional/Financial Services, and Transportation/ Distribution/Logistics. The Board developed industry and occupational materials around each of these four sectors and the demand occupations in each sector. In addition to overview materials, an orientation Power Point and Career Advisor Guide was developed to ensure that customers of the One-Stop Center have a wide berth of information about the four sectors, including career pathways in each sector.

Coordinated by our One-Stop Operator, partners meet monthly to provide staff the opportunity to understand each partner's programs and services so they can make appropriate connections for individuals and employers. These meetings are especially useful to expand services at the Center to people with disabilities (presence of VR representative), with limited English speaking abilities (presence of Adult Education representative), recipients of public assistance (offering TANF orientation at Center), Low Income older workers (coordination with SCSEP partner) and Veterans (specialized non-WIOA funded training and location of Will County Veterans Assistance Commission across the hall from the Center).

Workforce Services Division works closely with the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) which provides the Illinois JobLink job posting service, as well as programs to assist long-term unemployed, returning citizens, veterans, migrant workers, and others. Illinois Department Human Services staff (DRS & TANF) are onsite at the Workforce Center to provide information and conduct intake. Their programs include:

- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which provides cash assistance to families and pregnant women to help pay for food, shelter, utilities, and expense other than medical.
- Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD), which helps those who qualify and need cash assistance.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for low-income households to buy the food they need for a nutritionally adequate diet.
- Medical Assistance Programs for aged, blind, and disabled; and for families with dependent children. There is also assistance with obtaining Affordable Care Act coverage.

Career planners meet with customers in person and online depending on the customers' needs.

Newly placed Outreach Kiosks provides immediate access to services at the Workforce Center.

2. *Scaling up the use of Integrated Education and Training models to help adults get their GED and work on other basic skills and English language acquisition while earning credentials and industry-recognized credentials that lead to in-demand occupations;*

The Adult Education partner has focused bridge and ICAPs programming on two of these sectors (Healthcare and TDL) to allow customers to obtain both basic skills and occupational training in a coordinated fashion. JJC's Adult Education and Literacy division offers programs such as bridge and Integrated Education and Training (IET) programs which are developed to create opportunities for adult education students interested in a specific career pathway/field to co-enroll in high school equivalency or credit and/or English Language Acquisition/ESL classes and college-level courses in their area of interest

(i.e. health care, transportation/distribution/logistics, early childhood). IET programs are closely coordinated with JJC's CTE departments and Perkins and lead to an industry recognized and stackable certificate/credential.

Joliet Junior College Adult Education continues to expand and scale up their Integrated Education and Training (IET) models. The adult education program currently offers a hybrid (online and face to face) transportation, warehousing, and logistics IET program. Students are concurrently enrolled in ESL or GED courses while pursuing the TWL certification. Additionally, the adult education program offers process operator and certified nursing assistant IET'S. Expanding the availability of these programs has significantly increased the number of adult education students earning industry-recognized credentials and obtaining gainful employment.

Joliet Junior College Adult Education expanded their classes to a hybrid format to comply with State of Illinois and Joliet Junior College guidelines.

Using the insights and lessons learned from successful dual credit programs to scale up similar efforts in other sectors and regions;

Through the community college system, our local workforce area has dual credit programs with all of the high schools and career centers. The types and extent of classes offered varies by school. The community college, high schools, and career centers meet frequently to strategize and implement the best strategies including dual credit programs to ensure the future success of the student.

Staff from the Workforce Investment Board of Will County and Workforce Services Division of Will County participate in the Area Planning Council.

3. *How the core programs in the local area will leverage their business services to provide more holistic support to employers;*

Our Business Services Team, which includes our partner agencies, spends a great deal of time meeting with employers to better understand their needs and connect them with services. The team meets on a regular basis to discuss outreach and service efforts. The team developed a one-sheet, describing the business solutions and contact information for each area as well as a booklet of details listing the services available through each partner, which is reviewed and updated as needed. The team members have access to AGS Prime customer tracking system to note meetings; services needed and follow up conducted for local employers.

4. *Increasing the awareness of the services the workforce development system offers to both individuals and employers in the local area;*

- The Workforce Center produces newsletters throughout the year (one targeted to jobseekers/general public, and one focused on employers) – these newsletters are sent via Constant Contact where open rates and click-thru data is captured and reviewed.
- Working with our partners on the Service Integration Plan, we know that the more our partners understand of the programs available through each agency, the more likely they are

to promote them in their outreach efforts. Updates on program/service information is consistently provided to our partners to help in comprehensive outreach efforts.
- Placed in Libraries, Food Pantries, and Municipalities throughout the County, our Outreach Kiosks will provide more exposure to the programs and services available through the Center.
- A robust following on social media platforms (Facebook, X, Instagram, and LinkedIn) allows for increased awareness of the programs and activities available through the Center.
- The Center hosts a podcast (Will Works) that features many of the services available as well as topics that are timely for listeners. The podcast is available on the Center's website and several platforms (Spotify, Apple, etc.) and listenership continues to increase. A LinkedIn page was created to spotlight the podcast and guests furthering our reach.
- Success stories of individuals and employers utilizing the system are sent to municipalities, elected officials, and stakeholders throughout the year.

5. *Determining the most effective marketing methods and messages for informing college and university students about Prior Learning Assessments;*

Joliet Junior College has received a grant to build capacity for faculty to implement Prior Learning Assessments (PLA) to evaluate students entering CTE pathways who have workforce training, education, or credentials. The project will consist of training faculty and administrators on designing and implementing PLA and then institutionalizing PLA at JJC. This project will develop the assessment process for PLA in multiple CTE fields including Industrial Maintenance Technician, Electrical/Electronic Automated Systems, Management & Supervision, Computer Information and Office Systems, Horticultural Sciences, Law Enforcement, Construction Management, and Logistics.

6. *How targeted marketing can identify segments of the labor force, such as mature workers and the underemployed, who may not require extensive education or training to qualify for jobs in high demand occupations, as well as younger jobseekers that do not yet have a plan for post-high school career;*

The Center partners coordinate efforts between their agencies to target different segments of the workforce population.

IDES is able to target market to job-seekers through email blasts. The Workforce Center also uses social media, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, to promote various outreach events to targeted segments, depending on the skills required or the employer positions available. The Center also uses Contestant Contact to send out event announcements as well as a quarterly newsletter.

Reviewing data broken down by various populations helped identify and formulate a targeted outreach effort with included connecting with community-based organizations. Verbiage, outreach placement and enhanced messaging was developed and distributed to further engage.

Utilizing target marketing strategies, we will craft specific messaging that will resonate with each audience. A mature worker, for example, may not see posts on Instagram or X, but often have a Facebook account so creating posts that will appeal to this audience (mentioning an AARP article,

promoting events at the Senior Services Council and libraries, etc.) will help engage this audience. We will also use this demographic marketing strategy with other segments of the population such as younger jobseekers. In addition to specific messaging on Facebook, we will add other social media outlets, such as X, Instagram, TicTok, where we know most young people are turning to for information. We partner with all of the High Schools in Will County, and have outreach specialists who meet with students, make presentations at clubs, and hold information sessions at events. In each of these examples, we promote services for those who may not require formal or extensive training.

Moving forward, the Workforce Board and Workforce Center will continue to review data to better form outreach efforts.

Building and maintaining strong relationships with community based organizations and agencies that serve people with barriers is critical to reaching targeted populations, and ultimately serving those most suffering the economic effects and in need of assistance.

As such, we will continue to work with schools as guest speakers and provide information on topics such as resume writing, interviewing skills, basic workplace skills as well as work with Midland Institute CEO Program and the CED Internship Program.

We will continue to partner with organizations to implement Age-Inclusive Management Strategies (AIM) which include offering DEI&A statements that feature older workers, creating outreach strategies that attract experienced employees.

7. *Facilitating the development of career pathways and co-enrollment, as appropriate, in core programs (§ 679.560(b)(2)(ii)); and*

The identification of co-enrollment opportunities has significantly improved due to two specific activities. The first is the presence of multiple partners in the Center. Having a wider range of services and staff available encourages coordination and discussion. The second is ongoing meetings and planning sessions between the partners and their staff to share information, discuss opportunities, and plan strategies to ensure customers have access to all services necessary for them to obtain gainful employment.

As stated above, the Board developed industry and occupational materials around each of these four sectors and the demand occupations in each sector. In addition to overview materials, an orientation Power Point and Career Advisor Guide was developed to ensure that customers of the One-Stop Center have a wide berth of information about the four sectors, including career pathways in each sector.

8. *Improving access to activities leading to a recognized post-secondary credential (including a credential that is an industry-recognized certificate or certification, portable, and stackable) (§ 679.560(b)(2)(iii)).*

A general assessment questionnaire has been developed that all customers to the Center complete. This assessment will ensure that any and all services that would be appropriate for each customer are

identified. The assessment is the tool that will aid in identifying and addressing any barriers to employment the customer may have. This assessment will be the basis for each customer's career plan.

The career plan process will strengthen the development for career pathway planning even in instances where the customer may be seeking what they believe is a terminal path to employment. The process provides an opportunity for Center staff to discuss future pathway options, identify important credentials and certifications for future occupational growth, and ensure that customers have a strong understanding of the path to their desired goals.

After enrollment in WIOA, career planners work with clients to explain stackable credentials and focus on helping customers enroll and complete at least one credential in their pathway. During this process, staff assist clients in understanding their options (e.g. educational institutions, length of program, cost, etc.) for training to receive credentials.

Hybrid has allowed for easier access to services. The ability to connect to workshops and outreach materials 24/7 assists those who are underemployed or working in a 2nd or 3rd shift scenario.

E. Describe how local strategies will be coordinated with state (including the Illinois' WIOA State Plan), regional and local partners to enhance services and avoid duplication of activities, including a description of the following:

Applicable for each area/partner: Utilizing our online referral system, our service matrix, as well as information share at one-stop partner meetings, the partners of the Workforce Center of Will County will be able to coordinate event/project activities and avoid the duplication of efforts by each partner. Additional assistance/support and the appropriate partner to provide these are determined on a case by case basis with coordination through the referral system and subsequent conversations between partners.

1 *Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth employment and training activities under Title I (§ 679.560(b)(6)).*

Workforce Services Division serves as both the One-Stop Operator and as the provider for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth employment and training activities under Title I. In their role as OSO, WSD coordinates efforts in various ways, including:

- The development and use of an electronic intake information form that is shared for the purposes of general client information and referral purposes.
- Participation in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the partner agencies laying out the contributions and activities delivered in the Workforce Center.
- Participation in the self-assessment of the Service Integration process to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Monthly meetings to share information about services and activities in the Workforce Center.
- Coordinated job fairs and outreach efforts.

Services offered by Workforce Services Division of Will County include Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth training services, such as:

- Career scholarships (ITAs) for eligible adults and dislocated workers to attend training that leads to jobs that are in-demand in Will County;
- Resume reviews by Certified Professional Resume Writers;
- Mobile Workforce Center that travels to locations throughout Will County to assist job seekers (internet access for job searches/online applications, resume development/review, printer/copier) and businesses with targeted recruiting assistance;
- Job Board for Will County businesses to list their openings, and a Resume Gallery where job seekers may post their resumes for consideration by local businesses;
- Weekly job fairs for job seekers to meet with multiple businesses and for businesses to recruit/interact with potential job applicants;
- Job search workshops (resume writing, interviewing, networking, social media, Microsoft Word/Excel;
- On-the-Job Training opportunities, where employees can earn while they are being trained on the job.
- Connect to your Future for eligible out-of-school youth ages 17-24 – services include work readiness classes, paid internships, tuition and supportive service assistance to attend post-secondary training that leads to jobs that are in-demand in Will County.

2 *Adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. This description must include how the Local Board will carry out the review of local applications submitted under Title II consistent with WIOA Secs. 107(d)(11)(A) and (B)(i) and WIOA Sec. 232 (§ 679.560(b)(12)).*

Joliet Junior College Adult Education is the provider of adult education and literacy activities under WIOA Title II. In addition to providing staff at the Center, classes are also taught on-site. JJC also provides classes at its campuses as well as at other off-site locations throughout the County as well as online options. A representative of the Adult Education and Literacy department serves on the local board and participates in policy and program discussions. The WIB serves on the Adult Education Area Planning Committee and reviews the submissions for Title II funding.

Adult Education services are available (on a case-by-case) in Spanish, Russian, Croation, Haitian Creole and French. The campus has dramatically increased the number of courses offered online and in hybrid formats and many campus and support services are offered virtually. Additionally, JJC has a laptop loan program so students without computers can take classes.

3 *Wagner-Peyser Act (29 U.S.C. 49 et seq.) services (§ 679.560(b)(11)).*

Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES) is the provider of Employment Services under the Wagner-Peyser Act. A member of their staff is at the Center on a full-time basis, which has significantly decreased any duplication of services. IDES services include:

- Illinois JobLink job postings website, which is the Labor Exchange System;
- Reemployment Services and Evaluation Assessment (RESEA) program, which helps unemployed clients with a high likelihood of remaining unemployed;
- Re-Entry Employment Service Program (RESP) for returning citizens;
- Veterans Employment and Training Services (VETS);
- Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Program.

In addition, the Board is working with Wagner-Peyser staff on coordination of employer services and is including several departments within Joliet Junior College, IDHS-DRS, and the Will County Center for Economic Development (CED) services in the effort. Utilizing AGS Prime as our client management system for business services developed by our Business Services Team ensures each partner has access to the business' contact information.

4. *Vocational rehabilitation service activities under WIOA Title IV (§ 679.560(b)(13)).*

An IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services staff person is located in the One Stop Center one day per week. To ensure coordination, a representative from IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services is on the Board and participates in policy and program discussions. Services provided by DRS include:

- one-on-one counseling and guidance, and information and referral services for each customer;
- helping high school students plan for their futures after high school through our Transition and STEP programs;
- working closely with state, regional, and local employers, to offer individualized placement services that bring employers and qualified employees together;
- assisting customers through the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program to ensure they understand how working will affect their SSDI/SSI benefits; and
- providing Supported Employment Program services to eligible individuals with significant disabilities who want to go to work and need ongoing support services to succeed on the job.

5. *Relevant secondary and post-secondary education programs and activities with education and workforce investment activities (§ 679.560(b)(9)).*

Members of both the secondary and post-secondary education systems serve on the Workforce Investment Board, providing input and assistance in coordinating services and strategies. The Board partners with Joliet Junior College as well as the three four-year colleges located in the county on various programs (Governor's State University, Lewis University, and University of St. Francis). In addition, representatives from the three four-year colleges and the Director of the Adult Education program from Joliet Junior College serve on the Workforce Investment Board and the Program Operations Committee of the Board.

The Workforce Investment Board has always had a strong and effective partnership with both secondary and post-secondary institutions in the County. The development of new programming and services is done through the Board Committee structure which includes several members of each of these groups.

6. *How the Local Board will support the state strategies identified under § 676.105 and work with the entities carrying out core programs and other workforce development programs, including programs of study and career pathway programs under the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act authorized under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006 (20 U.S.C. 2301 et seq.) to support service alignment and needs identified in regional or local level assessments including the Perkins Comprehensive Local Needs*

Assessment (§ 679.560(b)(1)(ii)).

The provider of Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education programs has been a participant in the MOU discussions in Will County. The provider provides services in the One-Stop Center via webcam technology. In addition, the CTE program services are available on a part-time basis through a staff person from Joliet Junior College's Workforce Development Division who is housed in the One-Stop Center.

Through the 2020 Perkins V process, community colleges prepared a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) determining how well their CTE programs are aligned with workforce and economic development and if they are addressing the equity gaps in student access and success, particularly in special populations. This process allowed Joliet Junior College to assess and improve their current programing.

Both the local workforce board director and the Title 1 Business Services Supervisor serves on Joliet Junior College's CTE Business Advisory Council.

7 *Provide a copy of the local supportive service policies and describe how the Local Board will coordinate the provision of transportation and other appropriate supportive services in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(10)) and include information on the supportive services by each local program as appropriate.*

The Board works with the Title 1 provider, Workforce Services Division of Will County (WSD), on coordinating appropriate supportive services. WSD provides supportive services (as determined appropriate by a career planner) to enable WIOA customers to participate in approved training activities.

A copy of the WSD's Supportive Service Policies is attached to this plan in Exhibits as outlined in Chapter 4, B.-Local Policies and Agreements.

F. *Describe how the local area will provide adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities including:*

1. *A description and assessment of the type and availability of adult and dislocated worker employment and training activities including in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(6)).*

In addition to the services available through our Workforce Services Division of Will County (Title I) provider as stated above, a wide range of employment and training activities occur at the One-Stop Center. The resource room includes computers with resume development software, internet access for job searches and career information, books, DVDs and other materials on various job search topics, an open computer lab to gain knowledge of basic computer skills, access to job search websites, copier and fax machine for job search activities, assistance with cover letters and employment applications, keyboarding software, and staff assistance. Workshops include: Networking Tools for Today's Market, Creating/Uploading a Resume in Illinois JobLink, Getting to Know Excel, Microsoft Word, Microsoft PowerPoint, Master Your Job Search, Stand-Out Resumes, and LinkedIn-Maximize Your Profile, to name a

few.

The One Stop also provides assessment, guidance and career planning, access to labor market information, and assistance with job searches. The Center also hosts networking events and job clubs for sharing leads and ideas and learning job search techniques at the One-Stop.

The One-Stop provides Individual Training Account vouchers for those registrants in need of training in the identified demand occupations. The Board provides funding for on-the-job training (OJT) for adults and dislocated workers.

All customers seeking training must successfully complete a one-week Career Certified course. The course provides soft skills training as well as math, reading, locating information, computer skills, and communication skills. The Board has also partnered with an employer with a registered apprenticeship program for incumbent worker training.

2. *A description of how the Local Board will coordinate workforce investment activities carried out in the local area with statewide rapid response activities (§ 679.560(b)(7)).*

Workforce Services Division of Will County (WSD) has assigned the Business Services Supervisor as the lead in coordinating with the Illinois Department of Commerce on all rapid response activities. WSD and IDES attend all rapid response meetings and coordinates closely on all activities. Both staff will provide individual services, as necessary, to customers and employers who are in need of more specialized services. In addition, WSD works closely with local employers to match dislocated workers with current job openings when there is transferability of skills.

The Local Workforce Rapid Response activities, in coordination with Illinois Department of Commerce, participates in the activities virtually and conducts follow up meetings (either virtually or in person) with the company where and when appropriate, and based on the company's preferences.

G. *Provide a description of how the local area will provide youth activities including:*

1. *A description and assessment of the type and availability of youth workforce investment activities in the local area, including activities for youth who are individuals with disabilities, which must include an identification of successful models of such activities (§ 679.560(b)(8)).*

Youth programs include Occupational Skills Training program for out-of-school youth between the ages of 17 and 24 years old. All youth enrolled in WIOA programs in Will County are required to attend work readiness/leadership training and take the National Career Readiness Certification (NCRC) assessment, scoring a bronze certificate or higher, as part of their service strategy. Youth participating in this program may need additional support to ensure that they are successful in completing the program and becoming gainfully employed. Supportive services are provided to youth as needed. The program is based on a foundation of strict guidelines that result in a highly structured program that promotes the success of the enrolled individuals. Joliet Junior College Workforce Development is the current contractor for this program.

The Workforce Board, along with Workforce Services Division of Will County (WSD), IDHS-DRS, Joliet Junior College, and community-based organizations have started round-table meetings to discuss the challenges that face jobseekers with disabilities and possible solutions – working with employers and training providers. Career Ability Fairs are held semi-annually throughout the County with service partners and local employers. Additional fairs will be held in partnership with neighboring LWIAs to expand the service area and increase awareness. WSD has also started hosting presentations to local municipalities on the challenges that face jobseekers with disabilities and how the city/village can be part of the solution.

The Community College Initiative through IDHS-DRS also provides services for youth with disabilities. Youth with a disability who are interested in furthering their education at an Illinois Community College may participate in this program that can defray the cost of tuition. The IDHS-DRS also implements a youth employment initiative, STEP, designed to provide pre-employment transition services to youth with disabilities. Services include job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on post-secondary education, and workplace readiness training. Youth programming also includes supportive employment for youth to provide work-based learning opportunities for youth with disabilities.

The Illinois Department of Employment Security provides the Hire the Future Program for youth ages 16 to 24. The program provides assistance with employment, job readiness, and career development services. Another IDES program that has assisted with work-based learning opportunities for youth is the Fidelity Bonding program. The program designed to protect employers against employee dishonesty is being used with hard-to-serve youth populations.

2. *A description of how local areas will meet the minimum expenditure rate for out-of-school youth.*

Since 2005, it has been the policy of the Board to only fund programs for out-of-school youth. It was determined that youth who are not in school, either because they dropped out or completed and aren't engaged in work or post-secondary education, are at the highest risk of not obtaining gainful employment in the future. This target population is where 100% of all WIOA Title I youth funds have been spent and will continue to be spent. All programs funded by the Board must be for out-of-school youth, they must be open-entry/open-exit, and they must provide services on a year-round basis.

Working with our youth subcontractor, Joliet Junior College, we are placing a higher emphasis on stackable credentials and outlining the career pathways for jobs that are considered high demand with an eye on what is beginning to trend (i.e. electric vehicles, cyber/digital security skills, etc.

3. *The design framework for youth programs in the local area, including how the 14 program elements will be made available within that framework (681.460).*

When releasing a Request for Proposals (RFPs) for Youth services, we require the design framework of any bidder outline how they will incorporate the 14 elements or (if not them), state who will provide each element and how it will be delivered.

The Individual Service Strategy (ISS) form outlines the 14 elements and requires the career planner select the elements based on the participant's needs.

Provide a description of how the local area will provide services to individuals with barriers to employment and training as outlined in the Illinois' WIOA State Plan:

1. *Provide information on how priority will be given to recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals and individuals who are basic skills deficient consistent with WIOA Sec. 134(c)(3)(E) (§ 679.560(b)(21)).*

Workforce Center partners are committed to giving priority for individualized career services and training services to veterans, recipients of public assistance, other low-income individuals, and individuals who are basic skills deficient, in accordance with Illinois DCEO's WIOA Policy 16-WIOA-4.2. As several core partners provide specific service to low-income or skills deficient individuals, they will focus their resources on those in need.

Joliet Junior College's Adult Education and Literacy division serves all adults (16 years and older) who fall within their eligible populations, including any adult who has not obtained a high school diploma or recognized equivalent, whose reading, writing, and/or math skills are below high school level (basic skills deficient), and those for whom English is not their native language and who require assistance in reading, writing, speaking, and/or listening in English. Although income is not a factor in determining eligibility for Adult Education services, public assistance recipients, low income and basic skills deficient adults and out of school youth are majority populations among the 2,000 students served by JJC's Adult Education and Literacy division annually. DAEL will continue to accept all referrals and will provide appropriate services to all individuals requesting Adult Education. Basic Skills (reading, writing, math) are among the primary services offered by the JJC Adult Education program, serving hundreds of adults each year.

When customers enter the Workforce Center, they meet with a career planner. Part of this meeting is to determine if the customer has a High School diploma or High School Equivalency certificate. Customers who indicate they do not have either of these credentials are advised on the importance of obtaining the credential to increase their ability to obtain long-term employment. Customers who are willing to discuss this further are immediately connected with a staff person from Joliet Junior College's Adult Education and Literacy Division for further counseling and assistance.

Under the Connect to Your Future youth program, staff work with all local high schools to identify youth at risk of or who recently have dropped out of school. These students are contacted and encouraged to enroll in the program to work on obtaining their High School Equivalency certificate. In addition, significant outreach is done in the County to identify older youth who are in need of these services.

2. *Provide information on local programs, policies and procedures to address and mitigate barriers to employment and training.*

Below are a list of programs, policies, and procedures that focus on addressing and mitigating barriers to employment and training:

Will County has a Mobile Workforce Center (MWC) which travels to 5 different locations in the more remote areas of the county, including libraries and Village/City Halls. The MWC allows for customers, both job-seeking and employer, to access the same services available in the resource room of the Comprehensive Center. Customer tracking and usage are tracked on the MWC in the same way as the Comprehensive Center.

An IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services staff person is located in the One Stop Center one day per week. To ensure coordination, a representative from IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services is on the Board and participates in policy and program discussions. Services provided by DRS include:

1. one-on-one counseling and guidance, and information and referral services for each customer;
2. helping high school students plan for their futures after high school through our Transition and STEP programs;
3. working closely with state, regional, and local employers, to offer individualized placement services that bring employers and qualified employees together;
4. assisting customers through the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Program to ensure they understand how working will affect their SSDI/SSI benefits; and
5. providing Supported Employment Program services to eligible individuals with significant disabilities who want to go to work and need ongoing support services to succeed on the job.

Various workshops held throughout the month are livestreamed on social media and archived for a user to view at their convenience.

The Workforce Services Division of Will County maintains an electronic Job Board which is linked to their website and the Center's website.

Through a supplemental grant, outreach kiosks are being placed throughout the County. Each kiosk will provide direct access to the Workforce Center's services.

In addition, many workforce services are available online through Illinois WorkNet, and Illinois JobLink.

The Board maintains an updated list of community-based services for referrals as appropriate, continuing the goal of no wrong door. This will assist customers who may have needs outside of our abilities by providing an avenue to connect with the appropriate organization for further assistance.

3. *How the local workforce areas will ensure equitable access to workforce and educational services through the following actions:*

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County reviews the demographics of those who utilize programs and services at our quarterly committee meetings and bi-monthly board meetings. We will continue to monitor the results and, by working closely with our partners and local organizations, will develop actions where and when needed.

   a. *Disaggregating data by race, gender and target population to reveal where disparities and inequities exist in policies and programs.*

As part of our annual monitoring, the EO reviews data related to the usage of the center and advises on gaps. The Center partners use this data to develop action steps to increase awareness of the services available to the identified target populations. To the extent where it is possible for WIB to disaggregate data to review disparities and inequities exist in our policies and programming. WIB will also work with the partners to gain more knowledge and a comprehensive view of the people utilizing services.

Utilizing data collected from state and national sources, as well as in-house reports, the Workforce Investment Board and Workforce Services Division of Will County (Title I provider) are able to better identify disparities and inequities among targeted populations.

In reviewing IWDS Targeting Population data for PY22 year, we compared Title 1 (Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth) participant percentages to the total Will County population percentages (see below chart). This information will help us better understand the who is engaging in the workforce system and where we need to spend more efforts to increase awareness.

Workforce Services Division of Will County				
Breakdown		% served PY22*		% Will County Population
Male		60.6%		50.26%
Female		38.5%		49.74%
White		29.2%		62.0%
Black		53.4%		11.2%
Asian		2.2%		5.6%
Hispanic		23.8%		18.1%

*15.1% declined to answer
Will County Labor Force Source: IDES and US Census Bureau

b. Exposing more high school students, particularly young women and minorities, to careers in science, technology, engineering and math fields.

Working with our local high schools, vocational schools, employers, universities, and community college helps the Workforce Investment Board identify opportunities to expose more students to careers in STEM field. The WIB Director serves on the local Economic Development Board and participates in their Workforce Education Network Committee which helps identify those emerging industries throughout the County. The WIB also participates in activities coordinated by local NFP, After the Peanut, STEM for the Next Generation of Women and Minority Business Entrepreneurs. Through this organization, the WIB is able to present current labor force information, occupations and opportunities in STEM sectors within the greater Will County region, WIB currently participates in a group specifically charged with increasing awareness among female students of careers available in the Petrochemical Industry and the various occupations that make up this industry. Activities include guest speakers in the classrooms, shadow days at the plants, and internships for female students. This project is being led by ExxonMobil, includes Citgo, INEOS, Rho Chemical, and supported by local schools and career centers.

Information sessions on various career pathways, including those in the STEM fields are held throughout the County including at those community-based organizations such as the Spanish Community Center,

Aunt Martha's, Warren-Sharpe Community Center, Boys and Girls Club, Salvation Army, and Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Workforce Services Division of Will County (WSD) hosted a in March 2023 called Pathways to Professions (P2P) Career Expo. This hands-on career fair featured various business and industries and was designed to provide young individuals with valuable information, insights, and opportunities related to various career paths and professions. It aims to assist youth to explore different fields, understand the education and training requirements, and learn about potential career trajectories to connect with professionals and organizations. Over 800 high school students participated in the career expo which featured companies from all sectors including STEM industries (i.e. ComEd, ExxonMobil, Citgo) and training providers such as Joliet Junior College and Governor's State University's CTE Departments, and Wilco (vocational center).

This has become an annual event and continues to grow in participants, businesses, and training providers.

c. Exploring how effective mentor programs can be expanded to adults, particularly those who are displaced and moving to a new career.

Increasing awareness of the benefits of mentorship programs, particularly with dislocated workers looking to make a career change will help staff and Center partners better understand and develop a program for the Workforce Center of Will County. Identifying internal and community resources will be key to the success of any program developed.

Providing training to workforce program staff on data-driven approaches to address equity gaps.

Reviewing data from various sources will help identify equity gaps in services. Learning about gaps and how to utilize data to drive strategies will help staff understand how to better use it to address any equity gaps. Thus, these topics will be presented to staff at various Center meetings and Workforce Services staff meetings.

From these meetings, partners will develop strategies to best support customers utilizing their specific tools and resources.

d. Ensuring workforce services are strategically located in relation to the populations in most need.

Since November 2015, the Workforce Center facility was located on the edge of the St. Joseph Medical Center complex and is in a high traffic area bordered by several main thoroughfares. Pace, the suburban public transportation provider, stops three blocks from the Workforce Center and will provide door-to-door service to/from numerous locations.

In first quarter of 2026, the Workforce Center is moving to a new location that is owned by the County. This facility is part of the former Silver Cross Hospital and located near the VA Hines Health Care Clinic. The facility will also house the Veteran's Assistance Commission. The physical layout and design of the Workforce Center of Will County supports a culture of inclusiveness and accessibility with a bank of

operating elevators that will bring customers and visitors to the third floor where the Center is located. The exterior doors to the building have electronic sensors to open and close. All parts of the building and the Center, doors, hallways, restrooms, etc. are ADA compliant.

The Resource Room of the Center is a large, open space that provides ample space for customer movement and supports a culture of inclusiveness. With specialized assistance from the Illinois Department of Human Services-Vocational Rehabilitation, assistive technology and services are available and supported in the Center.

The Workforce Board and Workforce Services continuously reviews the demographic information and adjusts the located of the Outreach Kiosks when necessary.

4. *Describe any efforts in the local area to support immigrants and migrants through appropriate and allowable workforce services.*

There are multiple channels of support for immigrants and migrants to access workforce services. These range from state-sponsored employment centers and mobile workforce resources to community-based organizations focusing on education, rights, and integration—all of which help immigrants build skills, find jobs, navigate the labor market, and maintain long-term economic stability.

5. *Describe efforts in the local area to support SNAP program recipients.*

6. *Describe plans in the local area to coordinate services with recipients of Workforce Pell Grans beginning with the 2026-2027 academic year.*

I. *Describe how the local area will utilize a customer-centered approach to its service delivery model, including the following:*

1. *How a customer-centered or human-centered approach will be used over the course of this plan to improve local service delivery methods.*

Feedback from customers is key to understanding the needs of those who utilize our programs and engage in services. Receiving constant feedback from local users (including one-stop walk in customers, enrolled participants, employers, and social media followers) will ensure we are tailoring our services and strategies to meet the needs of our local communities and employers.

2. *Any efforts to provide services to customers in the spaces where they commonly visit (i.e., using a bus or other mobile solution to provide services outside of the one-stop center or having a local workforce are representative available at a public library at set times).*

Fifteen Outreach Kiosks have been placed in a variety of facilities including local libraries, municipalities, and food pantries. Data on usage is regularly reviewed to determine if the kiosk needs to be moved.

3. *Any efforts to review and update the referral process, including creating a universal referral process, utilizing an electronic referral management system, expansion of referral pathways, etc. If there are obstacles to updating the local area's referral process, describe them here.*

The Center just switched to AGS Prime as a way to collect data and make referrals. This online platform ensures that the customers' information is available to all partners whether in person or direct linkage. Space to update the customer record is included and all partner staff are trained to utilize the platform.

We are hopeful that this is a short-term solution until a state-wide system can be developed that would not only follow the customer throughout the local system but would move with the person if they move out of the local area and with the employer who may relocate or have multiple locations throughout the state.

J. Describe training activities in the local area, including the following:

1. *How the local area will encourage the use of work-based learning strategies, including the local area goals for specific work-based learning activities and proposed outcomes related to these activities;*

The Board prioritizes on-the-job training for adults. All youth contracts have a work experience component that is either funded in a subsidized manner or through direct employment opportunities. In addition, the Board has approved the use of OJT for older youth and persons with disabilities to expand work-based learning activities for these populations. The Board is also funding Department of Labor-approved apprenticeships via incumbent worker training through an employer partnership.

The Board is also working with Joliet Junior College on their Highway Construction Program and with JJC and Chicago Women in Trades on recruiting participants for a class to increase women in the trades.

A reporting process is currently in place to review and manage outcomes of work-based learning activities related to OJTs, youth work experience, and incumbent worker training. In addition, the staff responsible for OJT, youth work-based learning and incumbent worker programs are part of our Business Services Team. Their involvement in BST ensures we are sharing best practices across programs to engage businesses and jobseekers.

The desired outcome for work-based learning programs is a work-ready workforce that has added qualifications and skills, earned an income while learning said skills and meeting the needs of local employers.

The Illinois Department of Human Services – DRS offers a program that provides supportive employment for youth which develops employment skills on-the-job for youth with disabilities. This program is complimentary to the DRS Youth Employment Initiative program detailed earlier in this plan.

Through an IDHS TANF grant the Adult Education partner provides pre-employment training and assistance in obtaining work experience to TANF participants with limited work experience.

The local SCSEP partner engages older workers in their program to allow them to obtain work experience and necessary skills to move into unsubsidized employment.

2. *How local areas will provide training and professional development opportunities to staff regarding equity, access, trauma-informed care, and other topics concerning a customer-centered approach to service delivery.*

Our workforce area utilizes the professional development opportunities provided through Wednesday Webinars, Workforce GPS, and other DCEO and USDOL workshops. Staff participate in the annual WIOA Summit Conference, and we utilize local community-based service agencies, professional associations, and higher education facilities to provide professional development throughout the year. In addition, our Regional group offers a variety of training opportunities throughout the year. Topics available and presented through these various sources include equity, access, trauma-informed care, as well as strategies to insure a customer centered focus. These are available to workforce staff and partner staff to participate in and presented in various formats (hybrid, fully online, and in person) to provide the best opportunity for attendance.

3. *How training services outlined in WIOA Sec. 134 will be provided through the use of individual training accounts, including, if contracts for training services will be used, how the use of such contracts will be coordinated with the use of individual training accounts under that chapter, and how the Local Board will ensure informed customer choice in the selection of training programs regardless of how the training services are to be provided (§ 679.560(b)(18));*

The Board does not currently utilize contract training. The Board has developed a sector-based approach to assist customers with their choice of training. Information sessions are available for each sector to assist customers in making an informed choice on industry, occupation, and career path activities. The industry sector training approach is outlined below.

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County has long been implementing programs and initiatives based on industry sector analysis. Focusing on industry sectors has provided the Board with a targeted approach to program development and a strong connection to economic development activities in the County.

Career planners discuss with the customers their interests, strengths, and needs. After determining possible career pathways, customers are provided with information about the industry sector, the occupations, and training options. After the customer reviews and researches their options, they discuss their choice, and an action plan is put into place.

Sector initiatives meet the skill, recruitment, and retention needs of employers and the training, employment, and career advancement needs of workers. By meeting the needs of regional industry on behalf of a region's jobseekers and workers, sector initiatives strengthen a region's overall economic vitality.

4. *How the Local Board will ensure the continuous improvement of eligible providers of services through the system and that the providers will meet the employment needs of local employers, workers and jobseekers; and*

Annually, the Board produces a "Career Scholarship" report that provides information on the performance of training providers who received local WIOA Title 1 training dollars. In addition to this review, annual monitoring of both program and fiscal systems is conducted. Programs on the Training Provider List (ETPL) are reviewed every two years, per DCEO policy. Any changes to programs are identified and program outcomes are reviewed.

5. *How the local area tracks non-enrolling basic services provided to reportable individuals.*

Every customer is entered into our customer tracking system, AGS Prime, with their basic information and the services desired. This record is updated as services are provided and follows the customer throughout their experience with the local area. State programs, IWDS and IJL (IDES), are also utilized to track activity.

K. *Describe if the local workforce board will authorize the transfer of WIOA Title IB workforce funds, including the maximum dollar amount and/or percentage that is authorized to be transferred on an annual basis:*

1. *To transfer funds between the adult and dislocated worker funding streams.*

The Board reviews and approves transfers on a programmatic need basis. A memo from our Title 1 provider outlines the need for the transfer is submitted to the board for consideration. This allows our local area to respond to current trends, for example: recently there has been an increasing need for adult funding and a decreasing need for dislocated worker funding. The maximum percentage allowed for transferring funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker is 100% per guidelines, however the Board only transfers as needed and would not deplete one funding stream for another.

2. *To use funds for incumbent worker training as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(4)(A)(i).*

The Board reviews and approves allocations for incumbent worker training. The maximum allocation is 20% of WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funds.

3. *To use funds for transitional jobs as outlined in WIOA Sec. 134(d)(5).*

Based on local workforce needs, LWA 10 has determined not to spend funds on transitional jobs as the greatest need is in Adult and Dislocated Worker programs – rather, the board assists jobseekers and employers with work-based learning opportunities through internships and on-the-job training support.

4. *To use funds for pay for performance contracts as outlined in WIOA Sec. 133(b)(2-3).*

LWA 10 does not currently fund pay for performance contracts.

L. *Describe how a responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility are or will be incorporated in the operating systems and policies as part of the Local Workforce Innovation Areas (LWIAs).*

Responsiveness, inclusivity, and accessibility are embedded in LWIA operating systems and policies through data-driven planning, coordinated service delivery, and equitable access standards. LWIAs use labor market information, employer input, and participant performance data to continuously adapt programs, training strategies, and supportive services to meet evolving regional workforce needs. Policies prioritize inclusive outreach and integrated services for individuals with barriers to employment, including priority populations identified under WIOA, and promote co-enrollment and alignment among core and required partners. Accessibility is ensured through compliance with ADA and nondiscrimination requirements, the use of universal design principles, language access services, assistive technologies, and multiple service access points—including physical, mobile, and virtual platforms—so all individuals can effectively engage in workforce services.

The plan must include information on the actions the Local Board will take toward becoming or remaining a high performing board, consistent with the factors developed by the State Board (WIOA Sec. 101(d)(6)) and (§ 679.560(b)(17)). LWIAs are required to provide information and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities that are associated with performance goals and evaluation.

A. Provide information regarding the local levels of performance negotiated with the Governor and chief elected official consistent with WIOA Sec. 116(c), to be used to measure the performance of the local area and to be used by the Local Board for measuring the performance of the local fiscal agent (where appropriate), eligible providers under WIOA Title I Subtitle B and the one-stop delivery system (core and required partners as applicable) in the local area (§ 679.560(b)(16)).

1. *WIOA Performance Measures:* The negotiated performance goals for 2024 and 2025 are:

Performance Measure	PY24 Goal	PY25 Goal
Adult		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	70	73
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	70	73
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter	$9,000	$9,300
Credential Attainment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	72	74
Measurable Skills Gains	65	70
Dislocated Worker		
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	74	74
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	74	74
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter	$12,000	$13,000
Credential Attainment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	85	85
Measurable Skill Gaines	65	70
Youth		
Education/Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit	78	78
Education/Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	77	77
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter	$5,000	$6,100
Credential Attainment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit	65	69
Measurable Skill Gains	69	69

2. *Additional State Performance Measures*

There are no additional State Performance Measures.

B. Describe how the current and planned evaluation activities and how this information will be provided to the local board and program administrators as appropriate.

1. *What existing service delivery strategies will be expanded based on promising return on investment?*

Working with our partners through the Business Services Team, the Workforce Investment

Board is interested in expanding our outreach, both in the number of businesses contacted throughout the year, as well as the number of businesses that become engaged with partners at the Center. The Board also sees value in developing sector strategies with employers from various industries at the table. We believe understanding their common pain points will help us develop better strategies to solve those challenges.

We would also like to expand the Team to include other community partners such as economic development organizations and PACE.

2. *What existing service delivery strategies will be curtailed or eliminated based on minimal return on investment?*

Identifying any strategies that may be curtailed and/or eliminated will likely come from our service integration process. Once all partners have a sense of the programs and services that each offer, duplicated strategies may surface, at such time, the Center partners will determine the fate of said strategies.

Keeping in mind that based on a partner's particular charge, not all strategies determined to be duplicate can be eliminated, the Center partners will view efficiency of services or cost of services rendered to be a way to determine ROI.

3. *What new service strategies will be used to address regional educational and training needs based on promising return on investment?*

No new strategies at the local level, however, as part of the Workforce Partners of Metro Chicago Regional group, we discuss regional educational and training needs that could yield a promising return on investment and evaluate service strategies to ensure best use of funds and service delivery. These discussions on service delivery are part of regional discussions and as part of the region we will work to implement any identified strategies.

a. *What return on investment and qualitative outcome data for various education and training programs will be collected to identify barriers to enrollment?*

The Workforce Investment Board and Workforce Services Division gather feedback from the individuals and businesses who utilize our services through customer satisfaction surveys, follow-up services and evaluations. Additional information will be added as the Workforce Center partners develop action plans as part of our service integration process. As a result, the partners will review the information to identify and better understand any barriers to enrollment.

Annually review policies and procedures to ensure that they are in compliance with state and federal requirements and help eliminate unnecessary barriers or burdens to our customers.

b. *What are the most cost-effective approaches to taking down those barriers or helping residents overcome them?*

Once the barriers to enrollment are better identified/defined, the Workforce Board along with Workforce Center partners can develop action steps to eliminate barriers to enrollment. For example, if a resident has a difficult time visiting the Workforce Center in person, a virtual meeting is arranged. Utilizing existing equipment and partner relationships are the most cost-effective approaches to helping residents overcome barriers.

C. Describe how a lens of responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility (RIA) are or will be incorporated in the analysis of performance goals and implementation of evaluation activities.

The current performance goals do not take into account the specific customer categories such as gender, race, ethnicity, or disability. The Board does review the Target Population Summary report which provides that breakdown and helps ascertain the gaps in service. With this data, we are able to develop targeting messaging to specific populations.

- We believe that RIA exists when everyone has equitable access to high-quality jobs that provide safe, healthy working environments and offer opportunities for advancement and meaningful growth.
- We strive to remove bias and barriers in delivery of our services and seek to provide a balanced offering of career development programs.
- We will continue to provide the resources for our customers including job seekers and employers to grow and thrive.

As a local workforce system striving to serve as stated above, the use of disaggregated data will help identify areas of focus in both underserved populations and underrepresented occupations.

CHAPTER 6: TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND ASSURANCES

This chapter includes the technical requirements and assurances that are required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA Sec. 121 (c)(2)(iv)). LWIAs are required to provide information and analysis regarding the challenges and opportunities that are associated with meeting the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.

A. *Fiscal Management*

1. *Identify the entity responsible for the disbursal of grant funds described in WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i)(III) as determined by the chief elected official or the Governor under WIOA Sec. 107(d)(12)(B)(i) (§ 679.560(b)(14)).*

The Workforce Services Division of Will County is responsible for the disbursal of grant funds under the direction of the Workforce Investment Board. The County of Will is the fiscal agent for the WIOA Title I funds.

2. *Provide a copy of the local procurement policies and procedures and describe the competitive procurement process that will be used to award the subgrants and contracts for WIOA Title I activities (§ 679.560(b)(15)).*

The Board utilizes a request-for-proposal (RFP) process to procure contractors for WIOA Title I services.

See attached Procurement and Purchasing Policy in Exhibits as outlined in Chapter 4, B.-Local Policies and Agreements.

B. *Physical and Programmatic Accessibility*

A. *Describe how entities within the one-stop delivery system, including one-stop operators and the one-stop partners, will comply with WIOA Sec. 188, if applicable, and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.) regarding the physical and programmatic accessibility of facilities, programs and services, technology and materials for individuals with disabilities, including providing staff training and support for addressing the needs of individuals with disabilities (§ 679.560(b)(5)(iii)).*

The physical layout and design of the Workforce Center of Will County supports a culture of inclusiveness and accessibility. Located on the edge of the Presence St. Joseph Medical Center complex, the Workforce Center is in a high traffic area bordered by several main thoroughfares. PACE, the suburban public transportation provider, stops three blocks from the Workforce Center and will provide door-to-door service to/from numerous locations. The Workforce Center also provides ample parking for customers and staff, with a total of 292 dedicated parking spaces adjacent to the building, 19 of which are marked for individuals with disabilities.

All required career services are made available in the One Stop Center, either in person by staff who work in the One Stop or via technology. Adults, dislocated workers and youth are provided with services by WSD, IDHS, IDHS Division of Rehabilitation Services and Joliet Junior College onsite. All partners who do not have staff working in the One Stop provide their required career services via

technology. All customers accessing services will be provided with the following accommodations as needed/requested:

- Language Line
- Illinois Relay
- Sign language interpreter
- Braille keyboard/trackball mouse
- Intellikeys keyboard
- Dragon Speech Recognition software
- Braille printer
- Headphones
- Computer screen magnifiers
- 29 inch computer monitor

The One Stop Resource Room is connected to all partners that do not have onsite staff via a webcam. One Stop customers who desire career services from an off-site partner are assisted by Resource Room staff to connect with that partner via the webcams in order to connect in real time to partner staff who can assist them.

As a result of the pandemic, the use of virtual communication was implemented as an alternative to in person meetings. The use of technology to connect jobseekers, businesses, staff and partners was found to be an effective and efficient alternative. It expanded availability and access and the utilization of virtual platforms allowed for increased partner interaction to share program updates and customer resource availability.

B. *Provide copies of executed cooperative agreements (as applicable) which define how all local service providers, including additional providers, will carry out the requirements for integration of and access to the entire set of services available in the local one-stop system, with respect to efforts that will enhance the provision of services to individuals with disabilities (§679.560(b)(13)). This may include cross training of staff, technical assistance, use and sharing of information, cooperative efforts with employers and other efforts at cooperation, collaboration and coordination.*

All partners are trained on using the adaptive equipment as well as how to address the needs of individuals with disabilities. Information is also provided and additional training is done at monthly Center meetings throughout the year.

The CEOs of a local social service agencies, Cornerstone Services and the Will County Center for Community Concerns, sit on the Workforce Investment Board and on our Program Operations Committee. He provides information on resources available to jobseekers with disabilities as well as insights into employer expectations and accommodations.

There are no executed cooperative agreements – just the required Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the partner agencies.

C. *Plan Development and Public Comment*

1. *Describe the process used by the Local Board, consistent with WIOA Sec. 108(d), to provide a 30-day public comment period prior to submission of the plan, including an opportunity to have input into the development of the local plan, particularly for representatives of businesses, education and labor organizations (§ 679.560(b)(19)).*

The Board will post the plan at www.willcountyworkforceboard.com (the website of the Workforce Investment Board of Will County) where there will be instructions on how to comment over the 30-day public comment period. The Board will publish a notice in the Joliet Herald-News newspaper for three days indicating the plan is on the website.

In addition, once the partners developed, the draft plan was distributed to the Local Workforce Board for review and a request for input. The local board, which has representatives from business, education and labor organizations, reviewed the plan and forwarded comments and questions to the board staff director. Any comments received from these stakeholders were incorporated into the final plan.

The NEEDR Regional Plan was developed through a collaborative process between the seven (7) LWIAs in the Region, the WIOA core partners, Economic Development organizations, Educational entities, Business leaders, and other key stakeholders. In addition to soliciting input from each stakeholder group, a formal virtual meeting was held on Wednesday, February 14, 2024 to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to discuss the plan in a single meeting. The intent was to allow for discussion between stakeholders about the concepts included in the plan and provide additional input to be incorporated in the draft version of the plan. Over 100 stakeholders from across the NEEDR attended the session and a lively discussion was held.

After the stakeholder meeting, the Regional Plan was posted for public comment on Friday, February 16, 2024 throughout the NEEDR. The Regional Plan was posted for the required 30 days.

2. *Provide a summary of the public comments received and how this information was addressed by the CEO, partners and the Local Board in the final plan.*

After a 30-day publication, no public comments for the plan were received. In addition, there were no public comments received in any of the seven LWIAs in response to the Regional Plan.

3. *Provide information regarding the regional and local plan modification procedures.*

Because there were no public comments on the draft plan, no plan modification was required.

D. *Describe how responsiveness, inclusivity and accessibility (RIA) are or will be incorporated in with meeting the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs.*

As it relates to meeting administrative requirements of WIOA, LWIA 10 – Will County will continue to comply with all Federal, State and local requirements including Equal Opportunity policies, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and any other applicable statutory and regulatory requirements when hiring.

An RIA lens will continue to be incorporated to meet the administrative requirement of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act programs by considering the collection and analyzing of data about demographics, race, ethnicity, among other characteristics of participants in the workforce system.

The Workforce Investment Board of Will County will continue to work collaboratively with community, business, policy, and educational leaders to expand the vision of workforce development to develop a comprehensive blueprint for the continued growth and development of Will County.